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REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON ITS TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: J. A. Mwaniki (Kenya)

Chapter ____. DEMOGRAPHIC, SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENT STATISTICS

F. Human settlements statistics

1. The Commission considered item 9 (f) of its agenda at its 446th meeting, on 11 February 1991. It had before it the report of the Secretary-General on the general development and integration of methodological work, including experience and progress made in international classifications (E/CN.3/1991/24, sect. II.E).

2. The Commission noted the work undertaken by the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) on the further development of housing and human settlements statistics since the twenty-first session of the Commission, when the subject of housing and human settlements statistics had last been discussed. The work included an expert group meeting on human settlements statistics in 1987, convened jointly by the Statistical Office and Habitat; the publication, in 1985, of the Compendium of Human Settlements Statistics, 1983, prepared by the Statistical Office, and, in 1986, of the technical report on Concepts and Methods for Integrating Social and Economic Statistics on Health, Education and Housing (in particular chap. VII), also prepared by the Statistical Office; and the establishment by Habitat of a microcomputer database - Human Settlements Statistical Data Base (HSDB.stat) - in 1990. The statistical pocket book entitled Basic Human Settlements Statistics, prepared by Habitat, was expected to be published in March 1991.

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3. The Commission noted that the Commission on Human Settlements, in its resolution 12/6, had expressed deep concern about the deletion of the Compendium of Human Settlements Statistics from the work programme of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat and had invited the Statistical Commission at its twenty-sixth session to examine ways and means of resuming the work on the Compendium within the programme of work for the biennium 1990-1991. In response to the concern expressed by the Commission on Human Settlements, the Statistical Commission's Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Co-ordination, at its thirteenth session, had added the question of human settlements statistics to the agenda of the twenty-sixth session of the Statistical Commission. The Commission was pleased to learn that the Statistical Office, resources permitting, intended to resume work on the publication of human settlements statistics, including the Compendium on Human Settlements Statistics, in co-operation with Habitat, taking advantage of the 1990 round of population and housing censuses, and proposed to include the preparation of a human settlements statistics database and related tabular outputs in its programme of work for the biennium 1992-1993.

4. The Commission supported the initiative of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat to promote the development of housing and human settlements statistics and noted with satisfaction the excellent co-operation that existed between the Statistical Office and Habitat in the field of human settlements statistics.

Action taken by the Commission

5. The Commission:

Endorsed the proposed programme of work for the biennium 1992-1993 of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat in the development of housing and human settlements statistics, including work on methodology and data collection and compilation, to be carried out in close co-operation with the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat).

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REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON ITS TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION

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Addendum

Rapporteur: J. A. MWANIKI (Kenya)

Chapter __. DEVELOPMENT AND INTEGRATION OF METHODOLOGICAL WORK

1. The Commission considered item 10 of its agenda at its 447th meeting, on 11 February 1991. It had before it the reports of the Secretary-General on general development and integration of methodological work, including experience and progress made in international classifications (E/CN.3/1991/24, sects. I and II.A, B and C) and on updated information on the work of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat (E/CN.3/1991/30, sect. IX) and the report of the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination on its thirteenth session (E/CN.3/1991/2, sect. V).

2. The Commission noted with satisfaction that the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities, Revision 3 (ISIC, Rev.3) had been published and distributed to the statistical offices of Member States, the regional commissions and international organizations. Attention was drawn to the importance of correspondence tables between ISIC, Rev.2, and ISIC, Rev.3, which, for many countries, were considered to be useful tools for the implementation of ISIC, Rev.3. The Commission acknowledged the importance and usefulness of the introduction to ISIC, Rev.3, and noted with satisfaction that it was in full conformity with the current draft text of the revised SNA. In addition, some members from transition countries indicated that the introduction and detailed explanatory notes were found useful for their work during the transition period.

3. The Commission expressed satisfaction that the provisional Central Product Classification (CPC) had been submitted for publication some months ago, but urged that its publication and dissemination should be accelerated because a number of countries were waiting to use it in their work. The Commission was pleased to note that some Member States in the process of revising their national classifications were already making use of the provisional CPC in its draft form. The view was expressed that it would be useful to obtain information on the ways in which the provisional CPC was being implemented in various countries.

4. The view was also expressed that work on the development of conversion keys between ISIC, Rev.3, and the Classification of Branches of the National Economy (CBNE) of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) should be accelerated to assist countries in transition to implement international economic classifications. It was proposed that the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat share the workload in that exercise with the countries concerned, in co-operation with the Statistical Division of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the Statistical Office of the European Communities (EUROSTAT) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), in order to speed up the process of developing the detailed conversion keys. One member requested that assistance be provided during all stages of implementation of ISIC, Rev.3, and should not be limited to workshops and ad hoc advisory services.

5. The Commission noted that the work on international trade statistics and shipping statistics was benefiting from a high degree of cooperation among the various organizations involved. The Commission was informed that the Customs Cooperation Council (CCC) planned to work on amendments to the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System (HS) effective 1 January 1992. There were over 200 amendments, many of which were editorial but some of which might affect the correlation between HS and the Standard International Trade Classification, Revision 3 (SITC, Rev.3), that had been established. A major revision of HS was also under way in accordance with the provisions of the Harmonized System Convention which would be implemented in January 1996. The representative of CCC repeated the invitation he made at the twenty-fifth session of the Statistical Commission for statisticians to participate in the revision process. The Commission considered that it was important to maintain the correlation between the two classifications, although it recognized that too frequent changes in statistical classifications were not desirable. The point was made that, in the absence of changes to SITC, Rev.3, consequent to the revision of HS, countries or organizations that converted data from HS into SITC, Rev. 3, would have to make their own interpretations, which might differ, and that was considered undesirable. The Statistical Commission requested its Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination to consider at its fourteenth session the question of revising SITC, Rev.3, in the light of the amendments to HS scheduled for implementation in January 1992. In view of the rapid development in technology, the Commission considered that there was a need to review international nomenclature more regularly.

6. The Commission also supported the work under way in the Customs Cooperation Council for the introduction of standard quantity units at the six-digit level of HS. The existing United Nations recommendations, concepts and definitions for

international trade statistics made reference to quantity units, but additional work on standardization in that field was important for both international trade and transport statistics. The Commission welcomed the work on the Harmonized System Commodity Database, which would facilitate the application of HS by various users and would contribute to improving the quality of trade statistics.

7. The Commission expressed its appreciation to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) for providing information on and a demonstration of the Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA). It welcomed the introduction of version 2.3 of ASYCUDA, which had an improved module for extraction of statistical data, and the software package EUROTRACE developed by EUROSTAT, both of which were expected to enhance the capability of developing countries to compile international trade statistics and thus improve the availability and timeliness of international trade statistics. The Commission noted that 31 countries had implemented or were implementing ASYCUDA and another 57 countries were at earlier stages of investigation or establishing a project.

8. The Commission welcomed the cooperation between the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat and UNCTAD, whereby the Statistical Office collected data on goods loaded and unloaded in international seaborne trade and UNCTAD compiled that data with estimates to meet their needs. It reiterated its strong support for resumption of the work on international seaborne trade statistics by the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat, should additional resources become available.

9. In the field of energy statistics, the Commission noted the work on a new publication on concepts and methods to update a technical report previously issued in 1978 which would serve as a manual for developing countries to improve their energy statistics methodologies and data compilation activities. The Commission also welcomed the various cooperative activities in that field and the cooperation between the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat and the State Committee of the USSR on Statistics on the holding of a workshop on petroleum statistics in the Soviet Union in October 1991.

10. The suggestion was made that the paper might usefully be structured to provide an overall report on methodological development. The Commission noted that the document succeeded in keeping the Commission informed of developments in methodological work in certain fields that were important but that did not call for separate documents at this time and on which no major discussions of methodological issues was expected. It was also a response to the request by the Statistical Commission to reduce the amount of documentation for its sessions by summarizing work in areas in which no major discussion was expected. Methodological development was treated extensively in the relevant documents under other agenda items and it would be extremely difficult and a duplication to give an overall report on methodology within the page limit of the document.

Action taken by the Commission

11. The Commission:

(a) Welcomed the report on progress in international classifications, international trade and transport statistics and energy statistics and the cooperative efforts contributing to success in those fields, particularly with the Customs Cooperation Council;

(b) Strongly endorsed the proposed work by the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat on developing indexes, conversion keys, correspondence tables and related aids for the implementation of ISIC, Rev.3, and the provisional CPC in close cooperation with other international organizations and Member States;

(c) Recommended that the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat provide guidance to countries in implementing ISIC, Rev.3, and the provisional CPC, including provision of necessary technical co-operation and supplementary documentation;

(d) Welcomed the proposal to share the work of developing detailed conversion keys between ISIC, Rev.3, and CBNE among the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat, the Statistical Division of ECE, EUROSTAT, OECD and several countries in transition;

(e) Reconfirmed the request made at its twenty-fifth session that the Secretary-General submit to the Commission, at its twenty-seventh session, a progress report reviewing national and international work and needs in the field of implementation of ISIC, Rev.3, and the provisional CPC;

(f) Requested the Working Group to consider at its fourteenth session the question of revising SITC, Rev.3, in the light of the amendments to HS scheduled for implementation in January 1992.

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REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON ITS TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: J. A. MWANIKI (Kenya)

Chapter ___. COORDINATION AND INTEGRATION OF INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL PROGRAMMES

1. The Commission considered item 12 of its agenda at its 447th meeting, on 11 February 1991. It had before it the report of the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Co-ordination on its thirteenth session (E/CN.3/1991/2, sects. VI-IX) and the reports of the Secretary-General on the statistical work of international organizations (E/CN.3/1991/28), on the plans of international organizations in the area of statistics (E/CN.3/1991/29) and on updated information on the work of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat (E/CN.3/1991/30).

2. The Commission noted the statement made by the observer for Switzerland, in his capacity as Chairman of the Conference of European Statisticians, on strengthening international statistical cooperation, with particular reference to the region covered by the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE). A number of representatives spoke on the matter and the Commission, while recognizing that the issue would be discussed in various forums in Europe, decided to refer the matter to its Working Group and to consider it again at its twenty-seventh session.

3. The Commission noted the ongoing work on promoting coordination of statistical data collection activities, both regular collection by the statistical divisions of international organizations and ad hoc requests addressed to Member States for statistical information from non-statistical units of the United Nations and other

organizations. It also noted that the Working Group had concluded that considerable progress had been made among the international organizations on those issues over the past two years but had also requested specific additional steps to be taken in support of coordination of those activities.

4. The Commission recalled that it had noted under the relevant agenda items on service statistics, environment statistics and revision of SNA, the initiatives being taken by international organizations to accelerate statistical development while ensuring coordination in selected fields of statistics. The Commission requested the Working Group to review at its fourteenth session experience with those initiatives on the basis of the results that would have accumulated by that time and to report back to the Commission at its twenty-seventh session. The point was made that one of the initiatives, namely, the use of outputs of regional commissions as a basis for global work, was particularly useful as a means of transferring information. The outputs developed in one region could also be useful in another region and, in that connection, it was noted that outputs of the UNDP-supported Statistical Computing Project under the aegis of ECE were being transferred to developing countries.

Action taken by the Commission

5. The Commission:

(a) Requested the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Co-ordination to consider the question of strengthening international statistical cooperation outlined in the statement by the observer for Switzerland in his capacity as Chairman of the Conference of European Statisticians;

(b) Requested the Working Group to review experiences with new initiatives taken by the international organizations to accelerate statistical development while ensuring coordination in selected fields of statistics.

6. After reviewing the proposal made by the Working Group concerning possible changes in the composition of the Group (see E/CN.3/1991/2, para. 89), the Commission decided that the Working Group would consist of the officers of the Commission, namely, the Chairman, the three Vice-Chairmen and the Rapporteur; the representatives to the Commission of the two major contributors to the budget of the United Nations, unless they were already represented in the Bureau; and representatives to the Commission from other Member States selected so as to ensure representation on the Working Group of both developed and developing countries, countries with different economic and statistical systems and with special attention to ensuring representation of developing countries from among the members of each of the following regional commissions: Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA).

7. The Commission decided that the Working Group, at its fourteenth session, should consist of the following:

(a) Officers of the Statistical Commission at its twenty-sixth session:

Chairman: W. Begeer (Netherlands)

Vice-Chairmen: Eduardo Augusto Guimaraes (Brazil)
Hiroyasu Kudo (Japan)
Ivan Sujan (Czechoslovakia)

Rapporteur: Jothan Antony Mwaniki (Kenya)

(b) Representatives of States members of the Statistical Commission:

Emmanuel Oti Boateng (Ghana)
Lelia Boeri de Cervetto (Argentina)
Hermann Habermann (United States of America)
Majid Jamshidi (Iran, Islamic Republic of)
Vadim Kirichenko (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics)

(c) Alternates selected from representatives of States members of the Statistical Commission:

Naima Ghemires (Morocco), alternate to Emmanuel Oti Boateng (Ghana)
Miguel Cervera (Mexico), alternate to Lelia Boeri de Cervetto (Argentina)
Imtiaz A. Khan (Pakistan), alternate to Majid Jamshidi (Iran, Islamic Republic of)
Maria Teresa Sinisterra de De Leon (Panama), alternate to Eduardo Augusto Guimares (Brazil).

8. The Commission recommended that the fourteenth session of the Working Group be held at Geneva from 18 to 20 September 1991.

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REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON ITS TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: J. A. MWANIKI (Kenya)

Chapter __. WORLD BANK HOUSEHOLD SURVEY INITIATIVES

1. The Commission considered item 11 (c) of its agenda at its 446th meeting, on 11 February 1991. It had before it the report of the World Bank on World Bank initiatives in the design of permanent integrated household surveys (E/CN.3/1991/27).

2. The Commission was informed that the Social Dimensions of Adjustment Programme (SDA) had grown substantially since the twenty-fifth session of the Commission, both in terms of participating African countries, which currently numbered 32, and in terms of the number of multilateral and bilateral agencies supporting it. The activities of SDA have also evolved considerably since its launching. The Commission recognized that the overall primary objectives of SDA were to promote a greater degree of poverty-consciousness in national planning, policy and project design. To achieve those objectives, the SDA programme also stressed the need for an adequate national information system to monitor and evaluate the degree to which poverty levels were changing under economic adjustment. Hence, the involvement of SDA with statistics was as a means rather than an end. Although surveys were an instrument, the SDA programme emphasized the need for utilization of all existing data.

3. Some members expressed concern that SDA might promote the setting up of new or alternative statistical structures and overwhelm other statistical work. The

Commission was, however, informed that that was not the case and that one of the initial activities of an SDA country project preparation mission was to review existing data sources so as to identify priorities with national institutions, determine where data gaps exist and how the SDA project could best fill those gaps. The Commission was further informed that this would ensure that full use was always made of existing statistical sources before any new data collection programme was proposed. It was further pointed out that the design of a programme for a country in all circumstances involved nationals, including all major data users.

4. The Commission noted that an important activity of the regional SDA programme had been the development of prototype survey instruments that were made available to participating countries to measure the incidence and distribution of poor and vulnerable groups. The attention of the Commission was drawn to three such instruments: the Integrated Survey, a multi-survey similar to the Living Standards Measurements Study (LSMS); the Priority Survey, a light-monitoring survey designed to identify vulnerable household groups and monitor social indicators for those groups over time, and a Community Survey designed to collect information on the socio-economic infrastructure servicing the various household groups. The Priority Survey is already being implemented in a number of countries as a means of providing timely and inexpensive information on current social trends.

5. Several members of the Commission welcomed the emphasis placed by the SDA programme on the need for flexibility in the design of national SDA projects and on the clearly stated objective of ensuring that the SDA surveys would be implemented within the framework of national statistical activities and be closely coordinated with other ongoing survey activities.

6. The Commission also welcomed the objective of the SDA programme to strengthen national institutions in data collection, monitoring and dissemination, data analysis, training of nationals and establishment of viable and sustainable survey programmes.

7. The Commission requested that use be made of successful experience with SDA in the implementation of new SDA projects.

8. References were made to an interim evaluation report of SDA, but the Commission was of the view that it would be difficult to comment on a document that had not yet been presented for discussion by the SDA Steering Committee nor submitted to the Commission.

9. The Commission also noted the presentation of the LSMS programme. It was explained that the LSMS approach to survey-taking had moved beyond the experimental phase and was now generally considered to be an integral part of conventional survey systems.

10. The Commission noted that LSMS, which had first been piloted in Africa, was now operating in a number of countries in Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and the Middle East and that there was now also interest in the programme in Eastern Europe. Several members in whose countries LSMS had been operating expressed their

satisfaction with the programme. Policy relevance and flexibility were stressed by two members whose countries had recently launched LSMS surveys. They further stressed that the survey would yield data covering a large number of important topics.

11. The Commission noted with interest that LSMS, which has been on the "cutting-edge" of developing PC-driven survey technology, considered that other programmes and statistical initiatives were now equally involved in that area and that it sought close collaboration with them.

Action taken by the Commission

12. The Commission:

(a) Appreciated the contributions of LSMS in the areas of methodological design, survey development and analysis and recognized its work in the area of PC-based survey design;

(b) Noted the focus of SDA on developing national information systems that feed relevant information directly into the policy-making process and welcomed the involvement of users in determining survey priorities;

(c) Noted with satisfaction the progress that had been achieved in coordination between LSMS and NHSCP; also noted the progress that had been made in coordinating SDA activities with other statistical programmes, more particularly, NHSCP; while recognizing the progress made, noted the complexity of some of the issues and strongly urged that efforts to improve coordination be intensified; cautioned against complacency in the area of coordination and emphasized the need for the eradication of competition; stressed the importance of regular, joint or simultaneous missions, exchange of information and further efforts to coordinate programmes at the country level as a means to enhance cooperation;

(d) Welcomed the increased flexibility and responsiveness to national priorities in the design of national SDA projects;

(e) Deferred giving endorsement to SDA inasmuch as sufficient evidence had not yet been received by the Commission;

(f) Requested the World Bank to prepare a progress report for submission to the Commission at its twenty-seventh session.

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Addendum

Rapporteur: J. A. MWANIKI (Kenya)

Chapter ___. SPECIAL ISSUES

B. Effects of structural adjustment programmes and the debt burden on the work programmes of national and international statistical services

1. The Commission considered item 3 (b) of its agenda at its 446th and 447th meetings, on 11 February 1991. It had before it the following documents:

(a) Report of the Secretary-General on the effects of structural adjustment programmes and the debt burden on the work programmes of national and international statistical services (E/CN.3/1991/4);

(b) Report of the Secretary-General on the progress made in the development of a co-ordinated United Nations system data base for selected social statistics and indicators of common interest and the development of related national data bases (E/CN.3/1991/20).

The Commission heard statements made by the representatives of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

2. The representative of the World Bank said that the Secretary-General's report (E/CN.3/1991/4) was too general and that it over-simplified the complexities of the structural adjustment process. In particular, it was the World Bank's view that adjustment policies went beyond balance-of-payments problems. The effects of structural adjustment on statistical offices were a matter not only of facing cutbacks in existing programmes, but also of meeting new programme challenges. Among such challenges was the need for different kinds of data to serve as an information base for policy makers - for example, indicators that addressed the social aspects of the adjustment process. With regard to the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade, his organization agreed that there was a need to look at the statistical implications of the Strategy. He emphasized the importance of a co-ordinated national and international effort among both data users and producers in order to identify the statistical indicators required to monitor the Strategy's goals.

3. The representative of IMF expressed satisfaction that the report appeared to have taken a number of the Fund's comments into account and was more balanced than an earlier version had been. However, IMF was of the opinion that the report still did not address the improvements in the areas of statistics that were of direct concern in the adjustment process, namely balance of payments and monetary and fiscal statistics. He acknowledged, however, that most often those statistics were compiled by central banks and ministries of finance rather than national statistical offices. He said that IMF had increased technical assistance and had expanded training programmes in the area of statistics. He reminded the Commission that, since the objective of a structural adjustment programme was to increase resources by the end of the programme, the assumption was that there would be increased resources for statistical offices to use.

4. The Commission noted that the general information on structural adjustment and the debt burden contained in section I of the report had been included as background information. The Commission considered that the discussion should therefore focus on the statistical issues raised in sections II and III. It was recognized that different organizations might have different interpretations of the phenomena of structural adjustment and the debt burden. The Commission was of the opinion that the report, supplemented by the statements of the representatives of the World Bank and IMF, would serve as a useful basis for the discussion.

5. The Commission's discussion of the impact of structural adjustment and the debt burden on national statistical offices and the statistical implications of the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade was not conclusive. The Commission noted that only a small number of developing countries had responded to the inquiry concerning the impact of structural adjustment and the debt burden on their work. Moreover, since the International Development Strategy had been adopted only in December 1990, an analysis of it was not possible.

6. One member noted that due to policies of the World Bank and IMF, public expenditures in many countries had been reduced, with serious deleterious effects on statistical services. A series of events that had taken place under structural adjustment was described, including a salary freeze, subsequent loss of statistical

office staff and the impossibility of recruiting statisticians, owing to preference being given to offices involved in customs and taxation; the end result was that the Statistical Office concerned had suffered a 30 per cent reduction in staff.

7. The Commission noted that one element of the adjustment process was austerity measures, which resulted in budget cuts. Such cuts affected statistical services as well as other public sector services. However, it was reported that in some cases the impact of structural adjustment on statistical offices might not be typical of other parts of the national civil services because of the availability of project funds. One member supported the thrust of the report, but pointed out that statistical offices did not always grasp or react quickly enough to requests for current data. Another view expressed was that national statistical offices were not always well-placed within the government structure to be informed of the need for statistical support to determine the effects of structural analysis. It was noted, in particular, that in francophone Africa, whilst policies on structural adjustment had been initiated in finance and economic ministries, statistical offices had remained in planning ministries. That had made communication between statisticians and policy makers difficult.

8. In view of the strong interest in the subject, the anticipated duration of the impact of structural adjustment and the importance of the International Development Strategy for development policies and programmes, the Commission recommended that the Statistical Office circulate the report, the comments of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and the section of the Commission's report dealing with the subject to all developing countries for comment. The comments received and related materials could then be brought to the attention of the Working Group for its views on further action on the subject.

Action taken by the Commission

9. The Commission:

(a) Requested the Statistical Office to circulate the report of the Secretary-General, the statements of the World Bank and IMF and the relevant section of the report of the Commission to all national statistical offices in developing countries for comment;

(b) Requested the Statistical Office to transmit the comments received and related materials to the Working Group for its views on further action.

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Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: J. A. MWANIKI (Kenya)

Chapter _____. PROGRAMME QUESTIONS

Programme performance and implementation

1. The Commission considered item 13 (a) of its agenda at its 447th meeting, on 11 February 1991. It had before it the reports of the Secretary-General containing an overall review of the statistical work of the international organizations for the biennium 1988-1989 (E/CN.3/1991/28) and updated information on the work of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat (E/CN.3/1991/30). Copies of the report of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination on its thirtieth session (A/45/16 (Part 1)) and the report of the Secretary-General on the programme performance of the United Nations for the biennium 1988-1989 (A/45/218/Add.1) were made available to the Commission.

2. The representative of the World Tourism Organization (WTO) made a statement supplementing the information on the Organization's statistical activities given in document E/CN.3/1991/28. The Commission was pleased to learn that an International Conference on Tourism Activities would be convened in Ottawa from 25 to 28 June 1991. The purpose of the Conference would be to examine several issues of statistics on tourism, including, inter alia, the definition of basic indicators, the improvement of coordination between producers and users of tourism statistics at the national level, with special attention to the needs of developing countries, profit derived from tourism and future information needs. WTO expected to

strengthen its coordination with the regional commissions in its future work on tourism statistics. The Commission welcomed the proposal by WTO that it submit a report to the Commission at its twenty-seventh session, in 1993, on the conclusions and recommendations of the Ottawa Conference, after consultations and coordination with the regional commissions.

3. The representative of the United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations also made a statement supplementing the information contained in document E/CN.3/1991/28. The Commission was informed that the Centre had developed several corporate databases, including one on service transnational corporations and a detailed database on foreign direct investment statistics. That work was undertaken in cooperation with the regional commissions and other international organizations, where appropriate.

Action taken by the Commission

4. The Commission:

(a) Expressed satisfaction with the progress made by international organizations in implementing their work programmes;

(b) Requested the Secretary-General to submit a programme report on the statistical work of the international organizations to the Commission at its twenty-seventh session;

(c) Requested the World Tourism Organization to submit a report to the Commission at its twenty-seventh session on the conclusions and recommendations of the Ottawa Conference, after consultations and coordination with the regional commissions.

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Rapporteur: J. A. MWANIKI (Kenya)

Chapter ___. PROGRAMME QUESTIONS: PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES AND PLANNING

Proposed programme of work of the Statistical Office for the biennium 1992-1993 and related information

1. The Commission considered item 13 (b) of its agenda at its 447th and 448th meetings, on 11 and 12 February 1991. It had before it the reports of the Secretary-General on the proposed programme of work of the Statistical Office for the biennium 1992-1993 and the new medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997 (E/CN.3/1991/31) and on plans of the international organizations in the area of statistics (E/CN.3/1991/29), a note by the Secretary-General containing the proposed programme of work of the Statistical Office for 1992-1993 and related information (E/CN.3/1991/CRP.1) and the proposed medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997 (A/45/6).

2. The Commission considered that its review of the programme of work of the Statistical Office as set out in document E/CN.3/1991/CRP.1 was hampered by a number of constraints and limitations it faced in the review process. It noted that many of those constraints and limitations had already been identified at previous sessions. Others arose out of the new procedures and instructions introduced in connection with the preparation of the proposed programme of work for

the biennium 1992-1993. The problems raised included: (a) limited time in which to consider the proposed programme of work; (b) the strict separation in the procedures between the review of the programme of work and budgetary considerations; (c) limited information on the allocation of real resources; (d) the artificiality of designating low-priority outputs or activities only from those subprogrammes not designated as high priority in the medium-term plan, since in the Commission's view, each subprogramme, regardless of its overall priority, might contain individual outputs or activities that it might wish to designate as high or low priority; (e) the format and terminology of the budget documentation reflected administrative requirements for the Secretariat, but were not readily comprehensible to outsiders; (f) the terms of reference of the Commission in respect of the programme of work were not clear; (g) the difficulty of assimilating in a short time a large number of changes in the proposed programme of work introduced orally by the Secretariat on the basis of the Commission's deliberations, although the Commission recognized the necessity of modifying the proposed programme to reflect its substantive discussions in the course of its current session.

3. In spite of those concerns, the Commission agreed that the proposed programme of work, as modified by the Secretariat, was in line with the Commission's discussions, reflected broadly the priorities and objectives set by the Commission and constituted an appropriate basis for organizing the work of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat in the biennium 1992-1993. The Commission felt that it could not consider each output or activity in detail but noted that it had in fact considered most of them in the course of its current deliberations and that its conclusions had been fully taken into account by the Secretariat in orally revising the programme of work. Furthermore, it noted that in spite of its reservations concerning the information and time available and complexity of the process, high and low priority outputs and activities had been identified in the programme as requested. Accordingly, the Commission endorsed the proposed programme of work as amended. Whether or not the resource requirements of the programme might exceed the zero-growth budget guidelines established for the Organization as a whole, and whether or not any additional resources required for the programme could be reallocated from other parts of the Organization, were questions that the Commission felt not competent to consider.

4. The representative of the United States expressed reservations on that point. It was his delegation's view that in order to accomplish the programme of work proposed by the Secretary-General, a real growth rate appeared to be required. It was the general policy of the United States that no programme of work could be approved unless there was a concomitant increase in real resources. Therefore, the representative of the United States believed the Commission should re-examine the programme of work and eliminate those items of lower priority to achieve a real growth rate. Failing that, the United States delegation could not concur with the proposed programme of work.

5. Strong reservations were expressed about the wisdom of designating low priorities in the manner presented by the Secretariat. It was felt that the new procedure was difficult to understand from the point of view of rational planning.

6. The Commission expressed concern at the apparent decline of resources allocated to subprogramme 5 dealing with substantive support for technical cooperation in statistics carried out on behalf of the Department of Technical Cooperation for Development. It noted that activities under subprogramme 5 were largely carried out on the basis of extrabudgetary provisions and that the information on resources contained in document E/CN.3/1991/CRP.1 was limited to regular budget resources. Moreover, owing to the uncertainties arising from new agency support cost arrangements scheduled to go into operation at the start of 1992, as discussed under agenda item 11 (a), the Commission was informed that it was not possible to project the level of extrabudgetary resources available in the next biennium.

7. The Commission expressed general concern at the late distribution of the documents for the session. In the light of the fact that members must consult with other colleagues both within their own substantive areas and related offices so as to be able to accurately reflect national concerns, there was a strong request that every effort be made to provide documentation for future sessions of the Commission well in advance. The Commission noted that in the modifications to the programme of work a reduction of reports to the Commission was recommended and that the reduction in documentation for the next session should promote timeliness.

8. The Commission particularly reaffirmed the highest priority for the completion of SNA. It was also felt that attention should be given to addressing the needs of transition countries that were in the process of moving from centrally planned economies to market economies. The Commission noted with approval that the Handbook on National Accounting: Application of the SNA in Transition Countries, which was accorded high priority, was a direct response to that need. It also was in full agreement with placing highest priority on the SNA Handbook on Inflation Accounting and various activities related to the transition from ISIC, Rev.2, to ISIC, Rev.3.

9. There was broad support for the further development of environment statistics, particularly reformulated to reflect the specific outputs and objectives as modified by the discussions and conclusions of previous sessions. The Commission endorsed the further development of the programme in the area of environmental accounting, development of world-level classifications based on the work of the Conference of European Statisticians and other core activities as agreed on by the Commission under agenda item 9 (e).

10. The Commission generally supported the reduced percentage of resources for compilation and dissemination activities, but agreed that that should result from efficiency gains not reductions in outputs. The Commission was concerned that the quality and tim iness of the recurrent publications might be jeopardized since subprogrammes 2 and 3 were not accorded high priority. Several agencies noted the great importance of timely, comprehensive and reliable statistics in recurrent publications prepared by the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat. They also supported the view that recurrent statistical publications should be reviewed with a view to improving relevance, timeliness and reliability. The Commission noted that the proposed programme of work made provision for an expert group meeting to study and revise the Monthly Bulletin of Statistics and the

Statistical Yearbook, with a view to improving timeliness, efficiency and relevance to a wide range of users.

11. The Commission was pleased to note that specific outputs/activities in subprogrammes 2 and 3 were directed towards the improvement of the trade statistics database (COMTRADE) so that users of external trade statistics would receive the data in a better and more timely manner. It was noted that the number of countries in the COMTRADE database had been increased and attention was being given to improving the quality of the data.

12. A suggestion was made that work on the International Comparison Programme (ICP) should be accorded high priority. In that connection, the Commission noted that the modified work programme made provision for the preparation and publication of the Informational Brochure on the International Comparison Programme and for the substantive and technical servicing of the Intersecretariat Working Group for ICP.

13. On the question of coordination, concern was expressed that there might be a disproportionate emphasis on demographic and social statistics in comparison with economic statistics. The question arose whether efforts had been made to coordinate activities of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat with those of the Population Division. The Commission noted that, in fact, there was an efficient division of labour between those two offices, which worked closely together.

Action taken by the Commission

14. The Commission:

(a) Approved the proposed programme of work of the Statistical Office for the biennium 1992-1993 as contained in the note by the Secretary-General (E/CN.3/1991/CRP.1), as orally revised, subject to the comments made;

(b) Approved the priorities designated in the note by the Secretary-General (E/CN.3/1991/CRP.1), as orally revised and subject to the comments of the Commission;

(c) Requested the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat to provide information on the proposed programme of work for the biennium 1994-1995 to the Commission at its twenty-seventh session in a more simplified format.

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REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON ITS TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: J. A. MWANIKI (Kenya)

Chapter ___. TECHNICAL COOPERATION

Coordination issues related to the National Household Survey Capability Programme, the Social Dimensions of Adjustment Project and the Living Standards Measurement Study

1. The Commission considered item 11 (d) of its agenda at its 446th meeting, on 11 February 1991. It had before it the reports of the Secretary-General on progress in implementation and co-ordination of the National Household Survey Capability Programme (E/CN.3/1991/26, paras. 12-28 and 54-56) and on progress made in the development of a coordinated United Nations system database for selected social statistics and indicators of common interest and the development of related national databases (E/CN.3/1991/20, paras. 44-46) and the report of the World Bank on World Bank initiatives in the design of permanent integrated household surveys (E/CN.3/1991/27).

2. During the discussion under agenda items 9 (c), 11 (a), 11 (b), 11 (c) and 11 (d), the Commission expressed a high level of concern about coordination of survey programmes and for social statistics and indicators. It stressed the importance attached to the need for effective coordination, collaboration and integration among the many survey programmes that compete for scarce resources within a country, while recognizing at the same time the fact that different surveys originate from different sources and with different objectives. The

Commission stressed the need for improved coordination at the country level, among the international organizations and between countries and international organizations with a view to delivering support to countries in an efficient way and with clarity and to make the best use of scarce resources at the national and international levels to meet national needs. Coordination was needed at all stages of survey work, including setting goals, providing technical advice on measurement and conduct of surveys, selecting indicators and determining methods of compiling them, implementing surveys and organizing funding, with the particular aim of avoiding duplication in data collection.

3. Concern was also expressed at the possibility of countries being presented with statistical systems that could not be sustained beyond the life of the programme. The representative of the World Bank explained that programmes such as SDA and NHSCP have different objectives and it would be wrong to view the two programmes as being in competition.

4. The Commission recognized the significant efforts that had been made to improve coordination and the successes that had been achieved, as set out in the reports and supplemented orally by the organizations involved and members of the Commission. Successful collaboration had been carried out, for example, in Pakistan between NHSCP and the Living Standards Measurement Study (LSMS) of the World Bank, and also in Ghana between NHSCP and the SDA project, because priorities were determined by the respective Governments. The Commission, nevertheless, considered that such instances of coordination were an exception and, on the whole, arrangements for coordination were inadequate and efforts at coordination needed to be reinforced significantly.

5. The Commission recognized that the main internationally sponsored survey programmes were relatively new, dynamic and covered fields of interest of several international organizations. Coordination of the survey programmes was being addressed within specific forums established for NHSCP, LSMS and SDA and the programme for monitoring the achievement of social goals as indicated in the reports. They had also been addressed in the ACC Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities, the overall mechanism for coordination among the international statistical organizations. Overall arrangements for coordination had been developed but problems still arose and were dealt with individually. The Commission noted the positive experiences with coordination involving joint work or well coordinated parallel work between NHSCP and LSMS during the past two years, as reported by several countries, regional commissions and other organizations. The situation with SDA was more complex and, although mechanisms exist for coordination and joint missions had been undertaken with some success, there remained considerable scope for improvement.

6. The Commission recalled the suggestion made by the Chairman under agenda item 9 (c) to establish a group for review of coordination of technical cooperation in statistics and its applicability to survey programmes. Several members stressed the important role the regional commissions play in relation to both the operational and coordination aspects of survey programmes and noted that the Addis Ababa Plan of Action for Statistical Development in Africa in the 1990s specifically recognized the need to improve coordination of all statistical development programmes at the national and international levels. Improvements in coordination in relation to LSMS in the ECLAC region were welcomed.

7. Many members of the Commission considered that for coordination to be effective it had to be at the country level and experiences of several countries had confirmed this. The aims of effective coordination were to avoid duplication and undue pressure on national capability to achieve a well-balanced and stable statistical programme. The fact that donors sometimes needed data for their own operational purposes had to be taken into account and reconciled with country needs. The point was made that arrangements had been established at the institutional level and that these had to be supplemented now with concrete actions at the country level. Successful cooperation depended on openness, goodwill and the elimination of competition, with efforts aimed at a common purpose, namely the advancement of statistical capability at the national level. Both the World Bank and the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat expressed their readiness to renew their efforts in a positive spirit of cooperation.

8. One specific way to promote coordination at the country level and assist countries in decisions relating to survey programmes was to provide to Governments a list of the various survey programmes and their major features, including advantages and disadvantages. Countries would then be able to make decisions and choices based on their particular needs and problems and establish the coordination steps required.

Action taken by the Commission

9. The Commission:

(a) Noted with deep concern that a number of problems in coordination among various technical cooperation initiatives in the field of household surveys still remained;

(b) Welcomed the action that had already been taken to improve coordination of survey programmes at the national and international level;

(c) Noted with satisfaction the progress that had been achieved in coordination with LSMS and NHSCP;

(d) Noted the progress that had been made in coordinating SDA activities with other statistical programmes, more particularly, NHSCP, noted the complexity of some of the issues and emphasized that there was scope for further improvement;

(e) Stressed that additional concrete steps should be taken by the organizations involved to improve coordination of survey programmes and in particular stressed the importance of regular joint and simultaneous missions, exchange of information and further efforts to coordinate programmes at the country level as the means for enhancing cooperation.

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REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON ITS TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: J. A. MWANIKI (Kenya)

Chapter ___. PROVISIONAL AGENDA FOR THE TWENTY-SEVENTH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION

1. The Commission considered item 14 of its agenda at its 448th meeting, on 12 February 1991. It had before it a note by the Secretariat containing the draft provisional agenda for its twenty-seventh session (E/CN.3/1991/L.3), which was orally amended in the light of suggestions and decisions made by the Commission at its current session. Other amendments and clarifications were made during the discussion of the draft provisional agenda itself. The revised draft provisional agenda along with the required documentation is contained in the annex below. The Commission requested that its Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Co-ordination review the provisional agenda and related documentation at its fourteenth session and introduce any necessary modifications.

2. Several members proposed that agenda item 9 (Demographic and social statistics) be subdivided so as to deal separately with the population and housing censuses and civil registration and vital statistics. The Commission agreed that both topics should be covered in the report requested, along with other issues to be taken up under item 9. The Working Group would review the outline for that report in accordance with past practice and might wish to consider whether agenda item 9 should be divided into two or more sub-items, as required. It was also suggested that a report on development indicators be submitted under an appropriate

item. The Commission decided to refer the proposal to the Working Group for consideration in the light of the outcome of the forthcoming meeting in Morocco, which was being convened as a follow-up to the UNRISD study on qualitative aspects of development considered by the Commission at the present session under agenda item 9 (d).

3. With respect to documentation, the Commission emphasized the need to receive the documentation for its twenty-seventh session in good time. The Commission noted that if meaningful and in-depth discussions were to take place, the documentation must be made available to participants in all languages three months before the scheduled session. The Commission considered that the bulk of the documentation should be available in October. It urged the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat and other organizations preparing documents to adjust their submission of documents to accord with that schedule and requested that all documents, once submitted, be edited, translated and reproduced in a timely fashion.

4. With respect to item 3 of its provisional agenda (special topics), the Commission requested that the topic to be chosen by the Working Group at its fourteenth session. It considered that the special topic discussions provided an excellent opportunity to introduce flexibility into its agenda so that the Commission could respond to new needs as they emerged. Nevertheless, the Commission noted that the agenda for its twenty-seventh session contained several substantive items that might take considerable time to discuss. Accordingly, the Commission requested its Working Group to select a maximum of one special topic either from among the remaining items on the condensed list of special topics for future discussion contained in document E/CN.3/1991/L.3 or from other important issues raised during the course of the Commission's discussions at its twenty-sixth session. A number of possible topics were mentioned. From the remaining topics on the condensed list, several members recommended selecting statistical education and training, particularly in developing countries. One member recommended that the topic on the European single market be reformulated and placed in a broader context. Two other topics suggested for special discussion were: (a) the statistical implications of the debt burden and structural adjustment and the statistical needs arising from the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade and (b) issues arising from the statement of the observer for Switzerland during the twenty-sixth session under agenda item 12. The Commission noted that both topics had been referred to the Working Group for further consideration and possible follow-up.

5. Several participants were of the view that the agenda of the Commission was very much the same from session to session and that a more fundamental restructuring might be in order. In that connection, one member proposed changing the order of discussion of agenda items for the twenty-seventh and subsequent sessions so that items holding more general interest (e.g. coordination, programme questions and technical cooperation) would be considered before the more specific topics. It was recalled that, in the past, when such an order of discussion was followed, the discussion of the topics of a more general nature tended to be diffuse and to reduce the value of the discussion of the specific substantive topics. The Commission considered that the Working Group might discuss that issue further.

6. In connection with its consideration of the provisional agenda for the twenty-seventh session, the Commission addressed a number of issues, both general and specific, including (a) the means for improving coordination of the international work in statistics, (b) the role of the ACC Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities, (c) the terms of reference of the Statistical Commission, (d) the means of improving the reconciliation of international trade statistics and estimates, (e) the role of the Commission with respect to the work programme of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat and (f) how the Commission or its Working Group might be able to provide a mechanism that would permit an independent assessment of the NHSCP of the United Nations and the SDA and LSMS programmes of the World Bank.

7. The Commission recalled that at its twenty-fourth session, the Commission had considered its terms of reference at some length and that a summary of the terms of reference was also contained in the section of the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997 dealing with statistics. However, the Commission requested the Statistical Office to circulate information on the terms of reference to Commission members in advance of each session. The Commission also requested the Statistical Office to circulate copies of the reports of the annual meetings of the ACC Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities to Commission members. Views were expressed that more work needed to be done on the reconciliation of international trade statistics and estimates and the Commission agreed that its Working Group might consider that matter further in the light of the discussions of the subject at the 1991 meeting of the ACC Sub-Committee. With regard to the independent evaluations of the United Nations and the World Bank survey programmes, the suggestion was made that copies of the available evaluations of those programmes should be provided to the Working Group.

Action taken by the Commission

8. Subject to final review by the Working Group, as outlined above, the Commission approved the provisional agenda and documentation for its twenty-seventh session (see the annex below). The Commission recommended that its twenty-seventh session be held at United Nations Headquarters from 22 February to 3 March 1993.

9. At its 450th meeting, on 13 February 1991, the Commission decided to recommend to the Economic and Social Council the approval of the provisional agenda and documentation for its twenty-seventh session (see chap.___, sect.____, draft decision).

Annex

Draft provisional agenda for the twenty-seventh session of the Statistical Commission

1. Election of officers.

2. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.

3. Special topics (to be determined).

4. National accounts and balances.

Documentation

Report on the revision of the System of National Accounts (SNA)

Report on the implementation of the revised System of National Accounts (SNA)

Final draft of the revised System of National Accounts (SNA)

Report of the International Labour Office on the informal sector

5. International classifications.

Documentation

Report containing a review of national and international work and needs in the field of implementation of the International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC), Rev.3, and the provisional Central Product Classification (CPC)

Report of the International Labour Office on the International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE)

6. Industrial statistics.

Documentation

Report on the World Programme of Industrial Statistics

7. Service statistics.

Documentation

Report on the work done by national and international agencies in the field of service statistics

8. Price statistics.

Documentation

Report on developments in the International Comparison Programme (ICP) and other related international comparison issues

9. Demographic and social statistics.

Documentation

Report on demographic and social statistics, including statistics on the advancement of women

10. Environment statistics.

Documentation

Report on progress made in environment statistics

11. Tourism statistics.

Documentation

Report of the World Tourism Organization on the International Conference on Tourism

12. General development and integration of methodological work.

Documentation

Report on general development and integration of methodological work

13. Technical co-operation.

Documentation

Report on technical co-operation in statistics

Report on the promotion of national household survey capabilities

Report on the Social Dimensions of Adjustment (SDA) project and the Living Standards Measurement Study (LSMS) (World Bank)

Report on the programme to monitor achievement of social goals in the 1990s and related methodological work

14. Co-ordination and integration of international statistical programmes.

Documentation

Report of the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Co-ordination on its fourteenth session

Report on the statistical work of international organizations

Report on the plans of international organizations in the field of statistics

15. Programme questions:

(a) Programme performance and implementation;

Documentation

Updated information on the work of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat, including information on programme performance during the biennium 1990-1991

(b) Programme objectives and planning.

Documentation

Draft programme of work of the Statistical Office for the biennium 1994-1995 and proposed revisions to the medium-term plan for the period 1994-1997

16. Draft provisional agenda for the twenty-eighth session of the Commission.

17. Report of the Commission on its twenty-seventh session.